1: Lattimore H-4 (no date) 1950 AI 1 Sinkiang AI 1

Also in the environs of Kucha, which is known to have been the center of a large and thriving principality, are the *Ming Oi* (literally "thousand houses") of Kyzyl, Kumtura, and Kiris. Those cave temples are cut out of the solid rock of cliffsides where rivers coming down from the high mountains have cut steep ravines. At Shorchuk, between Korla and Kharashahr, stand the ruins of an ancient walled town with many temples and burial monuments; as at Kucha, the local people refer to the shrines as *Ming Oi*.

The Turfan Depression, with its twin oases of Turfan and Kharakhoja, is particularly rich in artistic remains. Two old towns could be traced here: the more ancient one was in utter ruins but Khocho ("Chotscho"), the capital of the Uighur Kings of Turfan from the ninth through the thirteenth century, had numerous temples, monasteries, and tombs which generously rewarded excavation. In the rocky ravines near Khocho are great clusters of shrines and monastic dwellings both cut out of the cliffs and built on the banks. Most notable are the temples and stupas of the Tuyok Valley and the Sangim Gorge, and the great monastery terrace of Bezeklik (also sometimes called *Ming Oi*).

One further site which should perhaps be included is Khotan itself. Although structural remains of the old capital are limited to doubtful mounds of debris, large quantities of interesting metal and pottery objects of undoubted antiquity have been dug up in the oasis.

With few exceptions the structures of which any traces remain are of a clearly religious character. They can usually be distinguished as shrines, temples, burial monuments, or various parts of monastic establishments. Everywhere but in the Turfan basin, the religion is exclusively Buddhist. A few of the buildings in the old city of Khocho display murals of Nestorian Christian and Manichaean inspiration, and manuscript remains in the area confirm the coexistence in Turfan of these three faiths for several centuries.

Apart from temples cut out of rock, construction is generally of sun-dried bricks, stamped clay, or some sort of mud plaster

1: Lattimore H-4 (no date) 1950 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

172 778 341 strengthened by twigs and beams. As might be expected with such building materials, the architecture is generally simple and undistinguished. A few structures rise twenty or thirty feet; some boast true arches and some have several stories. In general the models followed are Indian and Iranian. The three basic elements of every shrine, whether rock-cut or free-standing, are a square or circular cell, a large statue or symbol of Buddha, and a passage permitting processions to go completely around the Buddha image.

172 778 531 In addition to the central Buddha figure the temples were often decorated lavishly with other sculptured Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (beings destined to attain Buddhahood) goddesses, Lopakalas (guardians of the directions), and so forth. The statues ranged in dimension from slightly over life-size figures in almost full relief to small sitting Buddhas surrounded by aureoles which were used as decorative elements together with floral and leaf motifs. Commonly the figures were made of stucco or mud strengthened with reeds or straw at the core.

They appear to have been cast in molds, often with separate forms for face, hair, ears, arms, legs and other parts; then joined together and attached to the wall. Variations could be introduced in the facial expression in the finishing-off process before the statue was completely dry. Afterwards it was coated with a thin layer of clay or plaster, painted with water colors, and gilded with gold leaf. Although in many cases the pigments have been washed away or destroyed, all figures seem to have been originally touched up in this way. In some temples whole walls were covered with a succession of such statues but sculptural representations of scenes comprising more than one figure are rare.

172 778 532 Even more striking than the statues are the mural paintings. Almost every inner wall and ceiling is completely covered with frescoes. Large dramatic compositions depicting scenes in the life story of the Buddha or the various future Buddhas are framed in decorative bands and flanked, perhaps, by row upon row of seated Buddhas. Overhead vaults are filled in with stylized moun-

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

341 •
443

KASHGAR ON BAZAR-DAY

[Face p.80]